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ABSTRACT

In 1997, New York State passed legislation implementing Universal Prekindergarten (UPK), a new educational program with the goal of providing a voluntary, high-quality preschool experience to all 4-year-olds and improving school readiness. One of the program requirements is that school districts contract out at least 10 percent of UPK funds to community-based providers such as child care centers. This study examined possible unanticipated consequences of UPK, especially those that could be detrimental to the overall system of early care for infants and toddlers. Information was collected through surveys and telephone interviews completed by child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agency directors and staff throughout the state, along with supplemental information from surveys conducted with district UPK coordinators. Findings and recommendations for enhancing the UPK program are highlighted under seven main topics: (1) CCR&R involvement in UPK implementation; (2) magnitude of potential UPK impact on infants and toddlers; (3) receipt of UPK funds; (4) perceived impacts on services to infants and toddlers; (5) competition for 4-year-olds; (6) community concerns; and (7) positive impacts. Findings indicated that the potential magnitude of UPK impact on infant and toddler programs was considerable. Concerns of widespread competition and loss of infant-toddler services did not appear to be warranted at the present stage of UPK implementation. It will be important to monitor possible impact of UPK on programs serving infants and toddlers in the future. CCR&R agency directors and staff identified several positive effects of UPK, especially better kindergarten preparation and greater recognition of the importance of early care and education. Concerns raised include lack of collaboration with community-based programs and the exclusion of family providers. (KB)

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Early Care for Infants and Toddlers:

Examining the Broader Impacts of Universal Prekindergarten

Kristi S. Lekies, Emma H. Heitzman, and Mon Cochran

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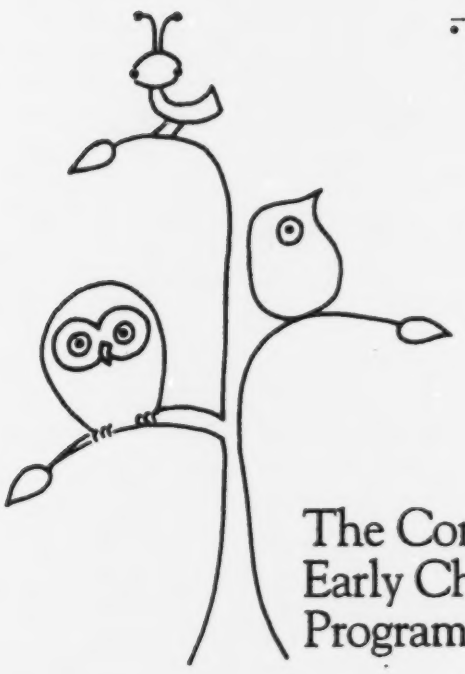

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Foreword

In 1997, New York State became the second state in the nation after Georgia to enact universal prekindergarten (UPK) legislation, aimed at the provision of voluntary educational services to all four-year-old children. Although the development of UPK is part of an overall effort to strengthen the state's educational system and prepare children for success in kindergarten, relatively little attention has been given to the role UPK might play in the child care arena, or to its overall impacts on early care and education as a system of supports for children and families. Of particular interest has been the requirement that school districts contract out a minimum of 10% of their UPK funds to community-based providers such as child care centers, nursery schools, private schools, preschool special educational programs, and other community-based programs for the provision of services. What does it mean for these providers when they receive a substantial influx of state dollars into their programs? Does this benefit the entire system of early care and education, or is there potential for harm? Is there increased competition for four-year-olds? Are there any impacts on services to infants and toddlers?

This research was undertaken as part of a series of studies on the implementation of UPK conducted by the Cornell Early Childhood Program. These include surveys to UPK coordinators, analysis of final report data submitted to the State Education Department, and extensive interviews with school administrators, UPK coordinators, advisory board members, center directors, and teachers in several case study districts. In this report, we hear the perspective of child care resource and referral agencies—those individuals best-suited for providing us with the larger picture of what is happening in communities. The directors and staff who completed the surveys and interviews of this study are the ones who assess community needs for early care and educational services, who monitor services, who are actively involved in service planning, and who keep in touch with a broad range of families and providers on a daily basis. We are grateful to add another voice to our understanding of UPK.

Because New York is the second state and the first of the ten largest states to introduce UPK, a study of the broader impacts of UPK represents an unprecedented opportunity to inform early care and education policy and practice nationwide. With its diversity, New York's program offers insight into the challenges involved with designing early care and education systems both in the country's largest and most concentrated city and in rural areas.

This report complements two other reports on UPK completed by the Cornell Early Childhood Program[1]. These are:

- *Promising Practices: New York State Universal Prekindergarten*
- *Collaborating for Kids: New York State Universal Prekindergarten 1999-2000*

Additional reports on UPK will be forthcoming over the next year.

[1] Copies are available through the Cornell Early Childhood Program or at the website www.human.cornell.edu/hd/cecp.

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We have many people to thank for the publication of this document. First, we would like to thank Alene Wyatt of the Day Care and Child Development Council of Tompkins County, Colleen Smith of the New York State Child Care Coordinating Council, and Nancy Kolben of Child Care Inc. for assistance on the survey and interview questions. Special thanks to Graduate Research Assistant Kimberly Kopko for her role in planning the interview questions and conducting the telephone interviews. We are also appreciative to Bonnie Levis for her diligent efforts in scheduling the interviews and gathering survey data. In addition, we wish to acknowledge our student and administrative team—Monica Arroyo, Elizabeth Boxer, Sherri Jones, Melissa Platt, and Susan Werner—for their assistance in gathering the UPK survey data, reviewing questions, and editing this report. Thank you to Phyllis deFano and Leslie Ungberg for their outstanding work transcribing the interviews and to reviewers Ruth Singer, Fasaha Traylor, Sarah Watamura, and Alene Wyatt for their helpful suggestions.

We wish to acknowledge the many child care resource and referral agency directors and staff who took the time to complete the surveys, look up information, and talk with us about UPK in their communities. We appreciate their willingness to share information that has provided us with much greater insight into the successes and challenges of UPK.

We are grateful to Luba Lynch and the A.L. Mailman Family Foundation for generously funding this work and providing the opportunity to pursue our research questions. Appreciation is also expressed to an anonymous donor for support of the UPK survey-based research effort. We also thank Dr. Ruby Takanishi and Fasaha Traylor of the Foundation for Child Development for their support of our overall effort to better understand the implementation of UPK.

Executive Summary

In 1997, New York State passed legislation implementing Universal Prekindergarten (UPK), a new educational program with the goal of providing a voluntary, high-quality preschool experience to all four-year-old children and improving school readiness. To date, the program has served over 90,000 children in almost 200 school districts. *Early Care for Infants and Toddlers* presents the findings from a study of the impacts of UPK on community-based services to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Of interest in this study were the possible unanticipated consequences of UPK, especially those that could be detrimental to the overall system of early care for infants and toddlers. Through surveys and telephone interviews completed by child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agency directors and staff throughout the state, along with supplemental information from surveys conducted with district UPK coordinators, much has been learned about the implementation of UPK in local school districts and communities.

The findings provide insight in a number of areas. These include the level and types of CCR&R involvement with the UPK program, the magnitude of potential UPK impact on infants and toddlers, the reasons why some child care centers are receiving UPK funds while others are not, the perceived impacts on services to infants and toddlers, competition for four-year-olds, and a number of community concerns—as well as many beneficial outcomes that UPK has had on children, child care programming, teachers, and families. This report presents findings in several key areas and provides recommendations to district planners, child care resource and referral agencies, and others involved in UPK regarding ways to further enhance community planning and program delivery. The research is part of a larger, comprehensive study currently underway that also includes surveys to district UPK coordinators over a three-year period of time and extensive interviews and classroom observations in four case study districts.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Findings and recommendations for enhancing the Universal Prekindergarten Program are highlighted under seven main topics:

1. Child Care Resource and Referral Agency Involvement in UPK Implementation

Child care resource and referral agencies have been actively involved in UPK by serving on advisory boards and committees, discussing UPK with parents, providing technical assistance and training to day care centers and other providers, and advocacy. CCR&R agency directors and staff also provided specific assistance to school districts. Examples included developing Request for Proposal forms, providing data on what services are available and the demand for services for four-year-olds, meeting with superintendents, attending public hearings, acting as a liaison between the community and school districts, publicizing UPK to community-based providers, and developing written guidebooks for school districts.

- **Recommendation 1:** A more complete compilation of examples of proactive involvement by CCR&Rs should be collected, distributed, and used to provide direction and suggestions for other agency directors or stakeholders interested in contributing to the realization of UPK in their local communities.

2. Magnitude of Potential UPK Impact on Infants and Toddlers

During the 1999-2000 year, community-based providers served approximately 50% of the upstate UPK children and 60% of the New York City UPK children.[2] Almost one-half of upstate child care centers and nursery schools used as UPK sites for four-year-olds, and about one-third of those in New York City, also served infants and toddlers (0-3 year-olds). Data suggest that about 10% of all upstate child care centers received UPK funds during this period.

- **Recommendation 2:** Child care resource and referral agencies should gather data on the number and types of programs in their county that receive UPK funds and monitor how this changes over time as UPK reaches full implementation.

3. Receiving UPK Funds

In all but one responding county, the CCR&R agency directors and staff reported that some programs serving infants and toddlers received Universal Prekindergarten funding while others did not. In many cases, only a small number of programs applied for funding. Some programs opted out because they did not have either a qualified teacher or sufficient space, they did not need the funding, the application process was lengthy, the deadline or opportunity for application was not well publicized or not publicized at all, or the funds were kept largely within the school district. Also in a number of cases, programs applied for funding but did not receive it.

In the UPK directors' survey, the respondents indicated a number of barriers that prevented community-based organizations from participating in UPK. Most frequently mentioned for upstate districts were inadequate staff qualifications, lack of available space, the amount of funding available, and poor quality programs. New York City directors mentioned staff qualifications, poor quality of programs, inadequate location, lack of required licenses, and paperwork requirements.

- **Recommendation 3:** School districts should invite all eligible community-based providers to participate in UPK and make the application process as clear as possible. School districts should collaborate with CCR&Rs and other organizations to provide assistance to programs currently ineligible to help them make improvements and meet the necessary qualifications.

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[2] K. S. Lekies and M. Cochran, *Collaborating for Kids: New York State Universal Prekindergarten 1999-2000* (Ithaca, NY: The Cornell Early Childhood Program, 2001). This document is available from the Cornell Early Childhood Program or through the website at www.human.cornell.edu/hd/cecp/.

- **Recommendation 4:** Analysis should be made of the district plans and budgets, particularly in those districts in which funding is considered to be a major barrier to community-based participation in UPK. A closer examination of these budgets—and the needs of community-based programs—will provide the State and district planners with information about the costs of providing UPK services, the challenges faced by local programs, and recommendations for those districts struggling with funding. These efforts will also provide information that can be used to advocate for additional funding if necessary.

4. Perceived Impacts on Services to Infants and Toddlers

The majority of the CCR&R agency directors and staff indicated that Universal Prekindergarten either had not affected or had increased the overall supply of childcare for infants and toddlers in their districts. Many explained that UPK has expanded the supply of child care either by allowing existing programs to increase their number of slots or by stimulating the establishment of new child care programs. Others maintained that UPK does not serve enough children yet to impact the overall availability of child care. Only two of the 30 CCR&R directors interviewed indicated that UPK has reduced the overall supply of child care in their districts. These findings are consistent with CCR&R survey data indicating little change in infant and toddler care due to UPK. Data from the UPK surveys revealed that districts did not place a high priority on the potential impact of UPK on 0-3 year-old services when choosing their UPK sites.

- **Recommendation 5:** Child care programs that have closed or are under enrolled since the implementation of UPK should be studied in more detail to determine if this is in any way linked to UPK. This information could be used to determine how such unanticipated consequences can be avoided.

5. Competition for Four-Year-Olds

The majority of agency directors and staff described competition for four-year-olds as a result of UPK as a "non-issue" for a number of reasons: 1) the demand for child care in their districts far exceeded the supply; 2) UPK does not serve enough children yet to cause competition; or 3) a half-day UPK program does not draw children away from other full-day programs. A minority of agency directors explained that UPK has increased competition in their districts simply by adding another childcare option. Only one agency director reported that enrollment has been affected in existing programs as a result of this competition.

- **Recommendation 6:** Advisory boards and school districts should keep in mind the possible impacts on the local child care market when deciding how to implement UPK. They should consider the number of four-year-olds in their area unserved by any early care and education program, the perceived need for early care and education for these four-year-olds, the need for full-day services, and the capacity of existing programs when determining whether UPK should be more school- or community-based.

6. Community Concerns

In most cases, CCR&R agency directors and staff expressed more concern about other issues surrounding Universal Prekindergarten than about competition for four-year-olds and effects on the overall supply of services. They cited lack of collaboration or consultation with existing child care providers, the half-day nature of the program, lack of transportation, lack of universality, fears about developmentally inappropriate practices and lowering the age of academic push, funding issues, and the certified teacher requirement as major community concerns.

- **Recommendation 7:** Advisory boards should include a broad range of community child care providers, and school districts should consult with community child care providers when planning how to implement UPK.

- **Recommendation 8:** Child care resource and referral agencies are strongly encouraged to gather information from parents of three-year-olds about anticipated needs for full-day care and work with school districts in designing programming to meet those needs.

- **Recommendation 9:** The state is encouraged to amend transportation aid to allow for reimbursement of the transportation of four-year-olds, consistent with the existing school-age reimbursement policies and procedures.

- **Recommendation 10:** Greater emphasis should be given to serving families across the full range of socio-economic levels and family types.

- **Recommendation 11:** School districts are strongly encouraged to pay close attention to discrepancies in the salaries of certified teachers in school-based and community-based UPK programs and seek ways to bolster the salaries of UPK teachers in community-based programs.

7. Positive Impacts

CCR&R agency directors and staff had mostly positive comments about Universal Prekindergarten and seemed to be optimistic about the future of the program. They cited benefits in a wide range of areas that included the success of UPK in meeting the needs of families and children, improving programming and child care, and bringing more educated people into the field of early care and education.

- **Recommendation 12:** Child care resource and referral agencies and school districts should document and publicize the positive impacts they have observed as a result of UPK. This information should be shared with state officials, community leaders, parents, and other school districts in the process of determining whether to implement a UPK program.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In 1997, New York State became the second state in the nation after Georgia to enact universal prekindergarten (UPK) legislation, aimed at the provision of voluntary educational services to all four-year-old children. To date, over 90,000 children have received UPK services in almost 200 school districts across the state at a cost of about $380 million during the first three years of the program. The response to the program by the implementing school districts has been overwhelmingly positive, particularly in preparing children for school, fostering enthusiasm for learning, and promoting positive family-school relations.[3]

The program has a number of key provisions including a phase-in of the program over a four-year period of time, educational programming that promotes English literacy, attention to parent involvement and support services, the integration of children with disabilities, and required teacher certification by the 2001-2002 school year. Districts are required to collaborate, or contract out, at least 10% of their UPK funds with organizations outside the public school setting, such as day care centers, nursery schools, Head Start programs, preschool special education programs, and private schools, for the purpose of providing direct educational services to children. While districts must comply with the law and regulations, local planning groups and school boards have a considerable amount of flexibility in choosing whether to implement a UPK program and in developing their own separate plans for the delivery of services.

With a program of this magnitude, questions have been raised as to its impact on the larger early care and education system. How does an influx of state funds into community programs affect these programs? Is there competition for four-year-olds between programs, particularly in districts where UPK is provided primarily by the schools? If centers that serve both infants and toddlers *and* four-year-olds lose their four-year-olds to school-based programs, will services to infants and toddlers be jeopardized? With revenue from older children offsetting the more expensive costs of infant and toddler care, will this loss of revenue cause financial hardship for programs? What other impacts have been noted?

Research on the supply of early care and education indicates that there is a severe shortage of good quality infant and toddler care. In general, good quality infant and toddler care is more expensive than is child care for older children due to its labor intensiveness. Higher-quality programs that employ more qualified staff, assign fewer children to each caregiver, and pay employees higher wages must cover these costs with higher fees. Families with infants and toddlers are often unable to afford these costs. This combination of factors leads to supply problems because the child care market can not sustain what parents can not afford.[4]

[3] Lekies and Cochran, 2001.

[4] D. Phillips and G. Adams, "Child Care and Our Youngest Children," *The Future of Children, 11, no. 2* (Spring/Summer 2001).

In April 2000, the Cornell Early Childhood Program received funding from the A. L. Mailman Family Foundation to examine the perceived impacts of the New York State Universal Prekindergarten Program on child care services for infants and toddlers. This study complemented and expanded several ongoing studies of the implementation of Universal Prekindergarten being conducted by the Cornell Early Childhood Program. Of particular interest were the unanticipated consequences of UPK, especially those that could be detrimental to the overall system of early care for infants and toddlers.

The primary objectives of the study were:

1) to determine the magnitude of potential UPK impact on services to infants and toddlers;

2) to understand why some full-day child care centers serving infants and toddlers are receiving UPK funding for four-year-olds in their programs when other such programs are not;

3) to learn whether child care programs receiving UPK funds are attracting four-year-olds from programs not participating in the UPK program; and

4) to document the perceived impacts that any shortage in supply of four-year-olds might have on those programs serving infants and toddlers that depend on service provision to older children for revenues to subsidize infant and toddler services.

CHAPTER TWO

Data Collection and Analysis

Data for this report were collected primarily from two sources: written surveys and interviews with directors and staff of child care resource and referral agencies (CCR&Rs) across the state.[5] Child care resource and referral agencies, also known as day care and child development councils, are private, non-profit organizations that recruit child care providers, offer trainings to improve the quality of care, maintain information on all certified or licensed programs in their county or region, and provide information and referral services to assist parents in finding services.[6]

In addition, several supplemental questions on services to infants and toddlers were incorporated into a survey of school district UPK coordinators. Data for all three components were collected between April and December 2000.

Child Care Resource and Referral Agency Surveys

Either the agency director or another appropriate staff member completed a written survey that included information about the local region, early care and educational services for preschoolers, CCR&R involvement in UPK, and UPK and the larger community. Surveys were mailed to 48 agencies, covering all areas of the state with the exception of New York City.[7] Some agencies were responsible for services in a single county, while others covered as many as four counties. Seven directors made referrals to other agencies or were responsible for more than one agency, resulting in a total of 41. Thirty surveys were completed for a response rate of 73%. Both urban and rural regions of the state were represented.

CCR&R Interview

The interview consisted of questions regarding the impacts of UPK on services to infants, toddlers, and four-year-olds, the supply of services, families and teachers, and community-based programs. Additional questions addressed CCR&R involvement in the implementation of UPK, receiving funding for UPK, competition for four-year-olds, and general concerns. Both upstate and New York City CCR&R directors and staff participated in the interviews. Telephone interviews were conducted with 25 of the 41 upstate agencies (61%) and with all five of the New York City agencies. As with the surveys, the agencies were located throughout the state in both urban and rural areas. It should be noted that 32 of the 41 agencies (78%) completed either the written survey or phone interview, or both.

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[5] Copies of the CCR&R survey and interview questions are available upon request.

[6] E. Cochran and M. Cochran, *Child Care That Works: A Parent's Guide to Finding Quality Child Care.* (Boston and New York: Mariner Books/Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

[7] Many of the survey questions were not relevant for New York City. However, some questions from the survey were incorporated into telephone interviews where appropriate.

Additional Data

In addition, several questions related to services to infants and toddlers were incorporated into a survey that was mailed to all UPK directors in the Wave One school districts. Wave One districts are those that began UPK in the 1998-1999 school year, the first year of program implementation, and that continued to offer a UPK program in 1999-2000. Fifty-four of the 62 upstate districts (87%) and 18 of the 32 New York City districts (56%) responded to the survey in the spring of 2000.[8]

Data Analysis

Survey data were analyzed using SPSS 10.0. Data from the telephone interviews were analyzed with the assistance of the QSR NUD*IST N5 software program.

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[8] See Lekies and Cochran, 2001, for more information about this study.

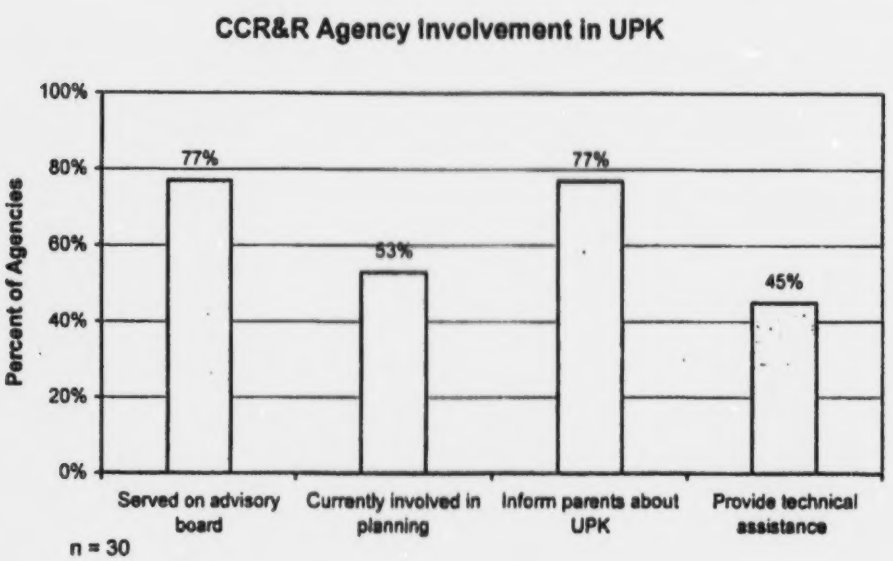
CHAPTER THREE

Findings

The findings of this study center around seven major themes based on the objectives of the study and the data that emerged. These consist of: a) child care resource and referral agency involvement in Universal Prekindergarten; b) the magnitude of potential UPK impact on infants and toddlers; c) receiving UPK funds; d) perceived impacts on services to infants and toddlers; e) competition for four-year-olds; f) community concerns; and g) positive impacts of UPK.

A. CCR&R Agency Involvement in UPK

Data from the surveys completed by CCR&R directors and staff in upstate counties were used to assess the level of CCR&R involvement in the implementation of UPK. Overall, the agencies have had an active role. Almost 80% of survey respondents reported that members of their CCR&R had served on UPK advisory boards during the planning of the UPK program. Over 50% cited some type of current involvement, including advisory boards, committees, and other types of assistance or advocacy. Over 60% received calls from parents inquiring about UPK and 77% informed parents about UPK when they responded to inquiries about early care and education options. Forty-five percent provided technical assistance to day care centers or other providers to facilitate the UPK application process, including training, completing forms and paperwork, and obtaining necessary licenses.



Data gathered through the telephone interviews provided information on additional ways in which CCR&Rs have been involved in UPK. The directors and staff mentioned developing the Request for Proposal form (RFP), providing school districts with data on the supply and demand for services for four-year-olds, attending public hearings, acting as a liaison between the community and school districts, publicizing UPK to community-based providers, and developing written guidebooks for school districts.

It is difficult to draw direct correlations between the level of CCR&R involvement and other factors under investigation, such as ease of UPK implementation, perceived UPK success, level of cooperation between the school district and the community, and effect of UPK on the overall supply of services because of the many factors affecting each of the these areas. However, the following excerpts from telephone interviews with CCR&R agency directors and staff illustrate the contrast between directors who reported little or no involvement and those who described many types of involvement in the implementation of UPK:

- "First, I designated my staff to represent the Child Care Resource and Referral throughout all of the other school districts here in the countries. I had a Child Care Resource and Referral coordinator attend all of the pre-development meetings...we were present at the public hearings...we did hear what some of the early childhood organizations...what their fears were...and what their concerns were...we sent correspondence to them and said, you know, we would be happy to assist you...those kinds of things"

- "We were on the advisory board to help them make a decision to do it...As part of that role, because our database includes all the licensed and registered child care centers, we were able to communicate to those centers the possibility of this program and bring them together to dialogue about what effect it was going to have on them...and try to help them move toward the process of applying to be part of the system...We helped to design the Request for Proposal that was initially used to go to those centers to ask for their participation and then to implement the selection process...We also, in the initial phases, provided the district with all the data they needed about how much already existed in the pre-K system, how many people had called us for referrals to that age level of care in the city school district...Because that's all data that we have computerized and available and were able to...provide...and to encourage them to offer the opportunity to everyone rather than making the selection initially themselves, and they decided that that was appropriate...So they did send their Request for proposal to every center...in the city without making their own judgments"

- "We were actually involved from the beginning stages of actually determining whether or not UPK would fly (is it needed, how would it be provided, who would the school district contract with for the slots that they're required to contract out?), assisted in the development of the Request for Proposal, provided the school district with data on what was currently available for four-year-olds, what kind of calls we have received requesting service for four-year-olds, etc."

- "We have been involved with the district as a whole — which encompasses the eighteen school districts…I have done various meetings with school superintendents as UPK was emerging, and we were getting information and that was being relayed to the school districts; and, as a result, myself or staff members have served on several different UPK advisory teams"

- "[name of agency omitted] has played a very lead role in putting together a very broad coalition of organizations in New York City that have worked to promote full implementation of UPK: to build partnerships between the public schools and local community-based organizations; to help people understand how to take full advantage of the UPK resources; to help the Board of Education understand how to take full advantage of the UPK resources; to bring together the Board of Education and other public funding agencies in New York to do problem-solving where there are overlapping systems and regulations; to develop numerous monographs on blended funding and cost allocation and planning for UPK; to track what's been happening, and to use that as an opportunity to identify what's working, what needs change to continue to broaden this. We've also been…really engaging the preschool special education community in a way that they haven't been working together as collectively with the rest of the early childhood community…Staff members have served on UPK Advisory Boards…We've promoted the development—the continuation of these boards"

B. Magnitude of Potential UPK Impact on Infants and Toddlers

School districts participating in UPK are required to contract out a minimum of 10% of their UPK funds to community-based programs for direct educational services to children.[9] During the 1999-2000 year, community-based providers served approximately 50% of the upstate UPK children and 60% of the New York City UPK children. The percent of children served by community-based providers ranged from 0 to 100%, with half of the upstate districts and one-third of the New York City districts placing over 75% of their UPK children in community sites.[10] Through the UPK directors' survey, efforts were made to understand the extent to which the community-based child care centers and nursery schools participating in UPK also served infants and toddlers (0-3 year-olds). In addition, CCR&R agency directors and staff were asked about the number of different types of programs in their counties for the past year and whether any of these programs received UPK funding.

Specific numbers were difficult to obtain because many of the districts and CCR&Rs did not have the data readily available in the format requested. However, estimates can be obtained from the data that were available from the school districts. Almost one-half of the upstate child care centers and nursery schools used as UPK sites for four-year olds, and about one-third of

[9] In a small number of districts, a waiver to this requirement was granted by the State Education Department.
[10] Lekies and Cochran, 2001.

those in New York City, also served infants and toddlers in the 1999-2000 year. Upstate CCR&R data from the responding regions suggest that about 10% of all child care centers received UPK funds during this period.[11]

C. Receiving UPK Funds

In all but one county, CCR&R agency directors and staff reported that some centers serving infants and toddlers received Universal Prekindergarten funding for four-year-olds in their programs while others did not. Why was this the case? Interview data provided information to address this question.

In many cases, only a small number of programs applied for funding. Some directors and staff did not know why this was the case. Others explained that programs opted out because they did not have either a certified teacher or sufficient space, they did not need the funding, the application process was lengthy, the deadline or opportunity for application was not well publicized or not publicized at all, or the funds were kept largely within the school district. Also in many cases, programs applied for funding but did not receive it. Representative explanations included:

- "The fact that you need to have an early childhood degree limits some people's opportunities"
- "Head Start provides transportation, and the other two places did not"
- "Private ones...have the clientele, they're full all the time, and they don't really need it...the additional funding was insufficient to make them want to go that way because they had certified teachers already"
- "There was an enrollment procedure, which was quite lengthy, and, of course, the requirement that there be a certified teacher in the classroom"
- "Wage differential—it skewed the salary range...When you have a public school salary range imposed on an early childhood salary range, and they're...way apart"
- "Really, the centers sought out the Universal Pre-K program"
- "In some districts...the application process was very short notice, like 24 hours...in some cases that there was no notification of the application process...in other cases where there was sort of like a minimal number to satisfy the ten percent that were allotted to a local daycare program...the manner in which it was viewed seemed to be primarily that it was going to stay in the schools...and that the use of community facilities was, in many cases, not even looked upon as an option"
- "It's just like applying for anything...It's whoever came out shining"

[11] These data were not available for New York City.

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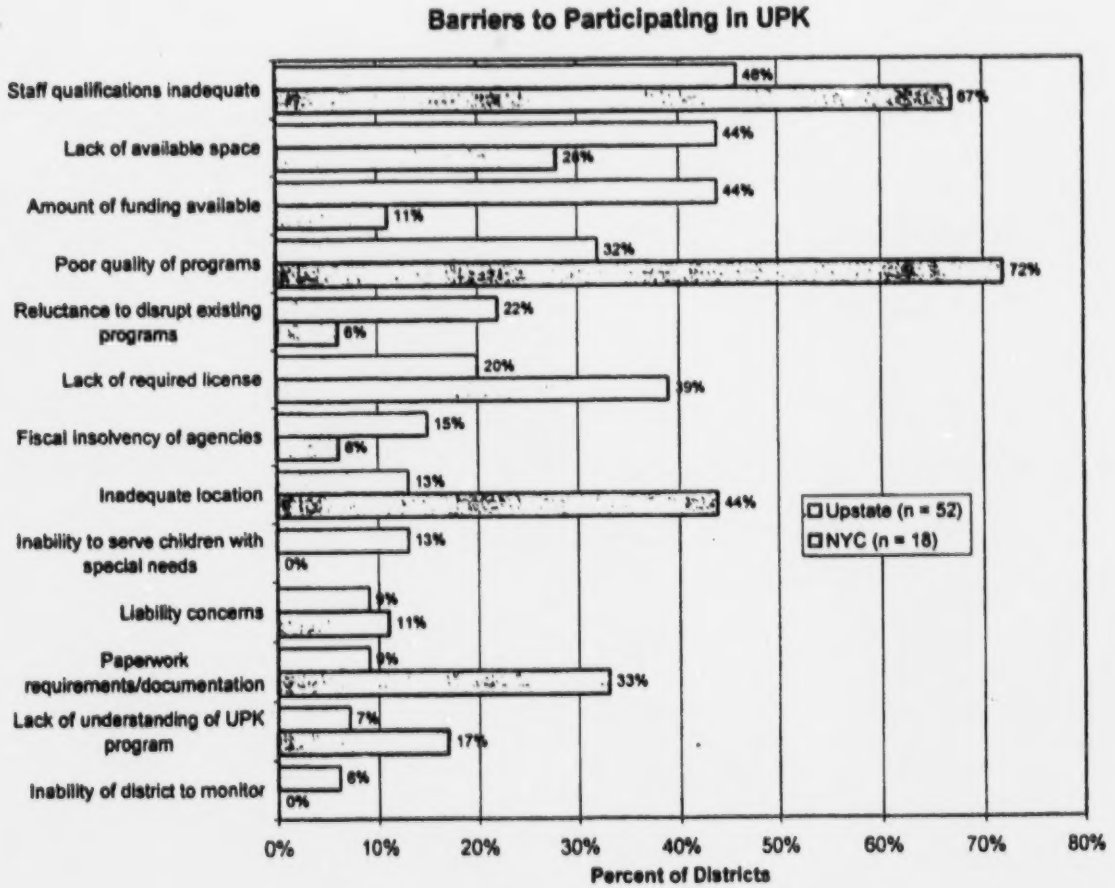
- They were denied because they didn't perhaps have enough space, they didn't have staffing at the adequate educational levels, etc."
- "Mostly fate"

In the UPK survey, completed by directors in upstate and New York City districts, respondents indicated that a number of barriers prevented community-based organizations from participating in UPK. Most frequently mentioned for upstate districts (between 40% and 50% of the districts) were inadequate staff qualifications, lack of available space, and the amount of funding available. About one-third mentioned poor quality programs. Over two-thirds of New York City directors mentioned inadequate staff qualifications and poor quality of programs. Between 30% and 45% mentioned inadequate location, lack of required licenses, and paperwork requirements.[12]



[12] Lekies and Cochran, 2001.

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D. Perceived Impacts on Services to Infants and Toddlers

Of particular interest in this study was whether any shortage in the supply of four-year-olds had affected those programs serving infants and toddlers, especially those that depend on service provision to older children for revenues to subsidize infant and toddler services. In the telephone interviews, the majority of the CCR&R agency directors and staff indicated that Universal Prekindergarten either had *not* affected or had actually *increased* the overall supply of child care for infants and toddlers in their districts. Many explained that UPK expanded the supply of child care either by allowing existing programs to increase their number of slots for infant and toddler care or by stimulating development of new childcare programs. Others indicated that UPK does not serve enough children yet to impact the overall availability of child care.

Representative explanations included:

- "Eighteen of the 56 kids in the preschool pretty much were turned into Universal Pre-K children"
- "Because it was only that 10 percent, it really. . .didn't have that much of an impact"
- "They have become a contractor with the respective school districts. . .and they have expanded the number of slots in those four preschools"
- "What we've been encouraging programs to do—and I think some of them on their own have decided to do—some conversion of three-year-old rooms or four-year-old rooms to serve infants and toddlers"
- "We're trying to make that an opening to expand the services for infants and toddlers within the same programs that already exist"
- "It could open up more infant and special needs slots"

Only two of the 30 directors interviewed answered that UPK had reduced the overall supply of childcare in their districts. These two directors sited the closings of two daycare programs and a Head Start Program:

- "The nursery schools...couldn't compete...As a matter of fact, I think she did close....Yeah, she's gone. There's only one left...One or two of them closed"
- "Well, Head Start moved into the childcare center...because they lost enough

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children to the school district...So now we went from two programs to one program other than the school district"

Agency directors who indicated increased competition for four-year-olds in their districts were probed further as to whether this competition had jeopardized existing childcare programs. Aside from the two districts in which programs have closed, only two directors cited that programs were at risk:

- "Well, if the enrollment is down, it jeopardizes the site"
- "It would mean a temporary loss of income"

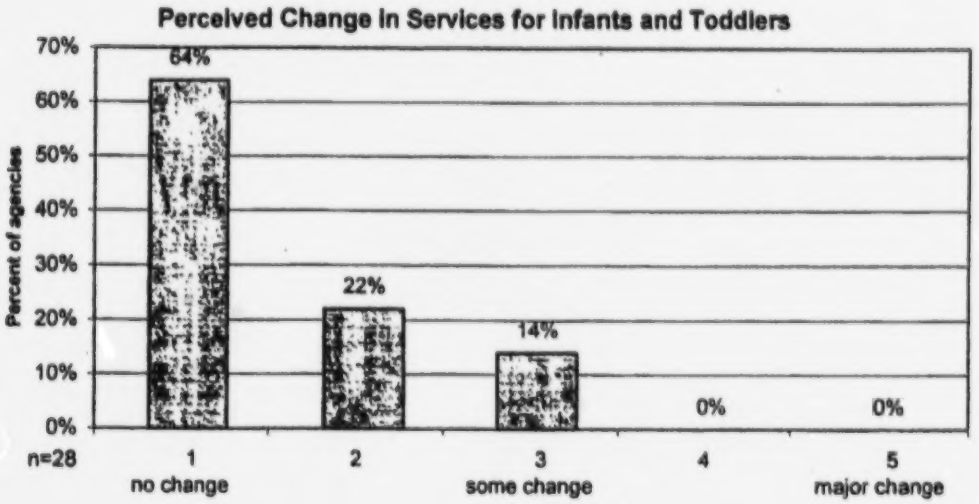
One agency director expressed a specific concern that UPK could have an adverse effect on child care for infants and toddlers:

- "One of the outcomes of this is that programs, if they want to survive, are going to have to focus on infant care. . .And . . .for agencies that run infant care, staff ratios are considerably higher, costs are considerably higher. . .And, again, coming out is how are people in the community going to pay for this?

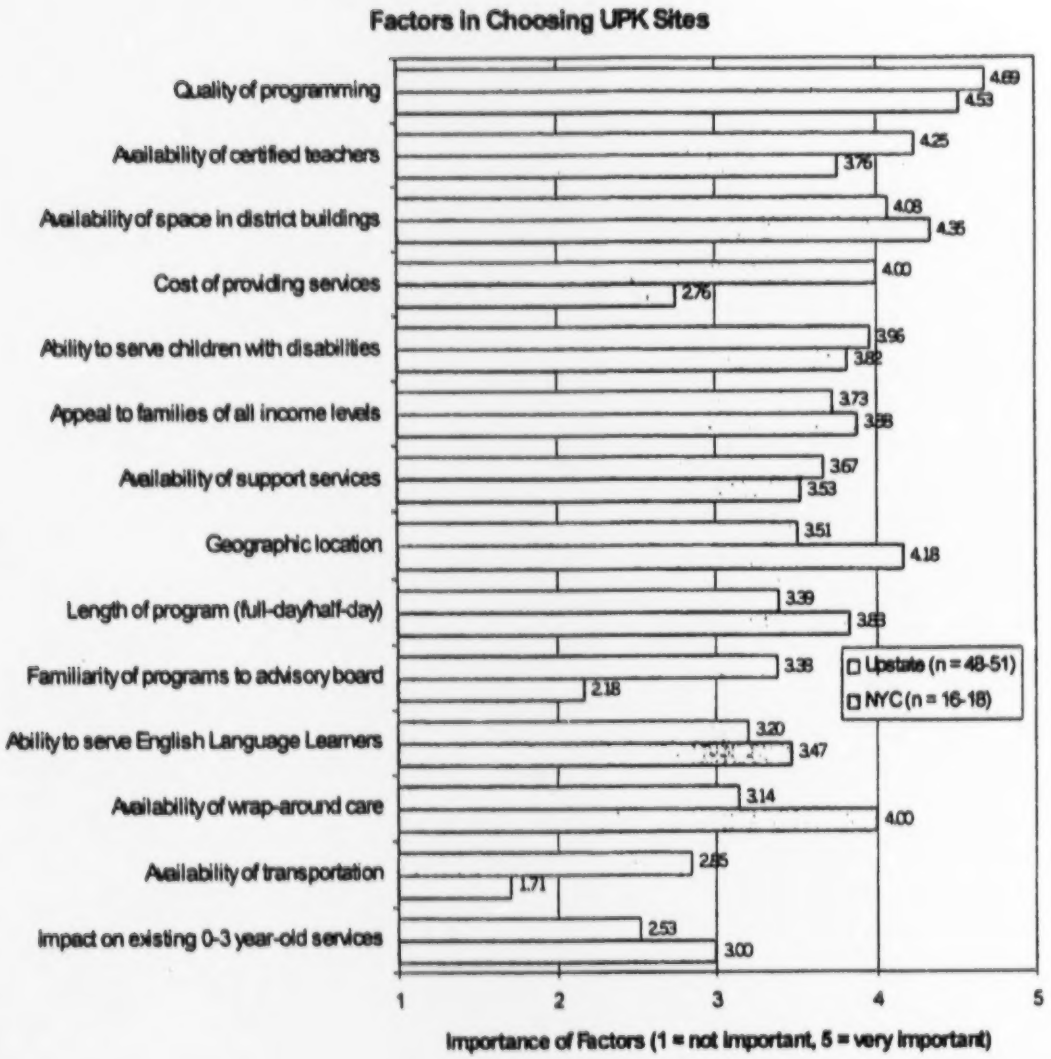
Many agency directors communicated that although competition had initially been a wide spread concern, after one year of implementation, fears were alleviated:

- "In the beginning—a year ago—the day care providers were very, very upset over losing a portion of their four-year-olds to Universal Pre-K, until they learned that it was the beginning piece with only eighteen children . . . Now, it's 49. . .I don't hear the hue and cry from the day care providers because they haven't really lost a lot of four-year-olds"
- "Some of the school districts were very doubtful that it would work. As they've talked to each other and seen it work in each other's district, they've come on board"
- "There's been more active outreach — sending out lots of proposals to programs with space, just inviting them to participate with UPK in their own environment, in their own classroom and school. . .that has definitely improved district feelings about participation in UPK from the first year"

On the survey completed by the CCR&Rs, the directors and staff were asked how much change they felt there has been in the child care services available to infants and toddlers in their counties as a result of UPK. On a scale from one to five, with one being no change and five being major change, responses averaged 1.50, indicating very little change. None of the responses were greater than three, as illustrated in the following table.



The survey completed by directors of UPK programs in upstate and New York City districts provided additional insight into the extent to which school districts were concerned about potential impacts on infant and toddler services when designing and implementing their programs. Directors were asked to rate the importance of various factors in choosing UPK sites on a scale of one to five, with one being not at all important, three being somewhat important, and five being very important. Of the fourteen factors, the impact on existing infant and toddler services was rated at 2.53, the lowest of the factors for the upstate districts and the fourth lowest (3.00) for New York City, indicating scores of only "somewhat important." The factors that upstate UPK directors felt were the most important were quality of programming, availability of certified teachers, availability of space in district buildings, and cost of providing services, each of which received an average rating of between 4 and 5. New York City districts rated quality of programming, availability of space in district buildings, geographic location, and availability of wrap-around care as most important.



E. Competition for Four-Year-Olds

The CCR&R telephone interviews also were used to learn whether child care programs receiving UPK funds attracted four-year-olds from programs not participating in UPK. Some agency directors and staff commented on the reality of increased competition and four-year-olds being drawn away from existing programs as a result of UPK. However, the majority of agency directors and staff described competition as a result of UPK as a "non-issue" because the demand for childcare in their district far exceeded the supply, UPK did not serve enough children yet to cause competition, or the half-day nature of the UPK program did not draw children away from other full-day programs. Comments included:

- "With welfare reform, you know, good programs—good early childhood programs—no matter what they are—nursery schools, family childcare homes, childcare centers—there will always be a hot demand for them"
- "We're seeing an excess of requests vs. supply"
- "People who are looking for these kinds of programs need full day care"
- "We're a large rural county. It's a program serving 10 or 15 kids out of the entire county; it really has had very little impact"

A minority of agency directors and staff explained that UPK does increase competition in their districts, simply by adding another childcare option:

- "You have to understand that this is a new program on top of existing programs"
- "I think there is clearly additional competition or alternatives for parents"
- "Just adds to the pot"
- "A small amount, but you know, definitely some"
- "There aren't that many four-year-olds and now they have other choices of where they can go"

Only one agency director reported that enrollment has been affected in existing programs in her district as a result of this competition:

- "Daycare centers are running at about an 85 percent enrollment rate"

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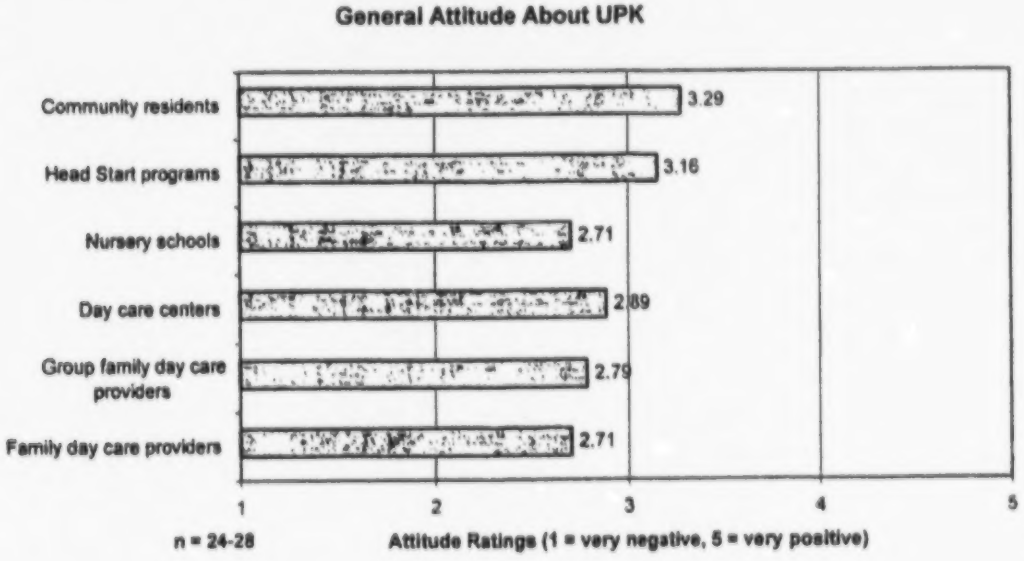
F. Community Concerns

In most cases, CCR&R agency directors and staff expressed more concern about other issues surrounding Universal Prekindergarten than about competition for four-year-olds and effects on supply of services. Some of the concerns included lack of collaboration or consultation with existing child care providers, the half-day nature of the program, lack of transportation, lack of universality, fears about developmentally inappropriate practices and lowering the age of academic push, funding issues, as well as the certified teacher requirement. Representative descriptions of concerns by CCR&R agency directors and staff and pertinent findings from the UPK Directors' survey are described on the following pages.

Lack of Collaboration with Existing Child Care Programs

As one method for assessing levels of community concern, CCR&R directors and staff were asked to describe the general attitude toward UPK by six separate groups: family day care providers, group family day care providers, day care centers, nursery schools, Head Start programs, and community residents. Survey responses were on a scale of one to five, with one corresponding to very negative, three corresponding to neutral, and five corresponding to very positive. Across all groups, average ratings clustered around 3, indicating that in the view of CCR&R directors, relations between district UPK programs and community providers could be improved. Head Start programs and community residents were perceived as having the most favorable attitudes toward UPK.



CCR&R agency directors and staff also referred to lack of collaboration with existing child care programs frequently in telephone interviews:

- "I think it would be in all the school districts' best interests to use the established early childhood programs but, unfortunately, what I've seen is that they're coming to the community after the fact, and a lot of people felt very shaky, kept out of the loop, and then when there was a crisis. . .then they called us all in"
- "The flavor of the whole conversation with school board members was, 'we want to keep this money in house' and 'we don't need to be involved with other agencies...we're fine on our own and we'll just request a variance' "
- "The city school district would not pay the daycare centers their fees until they actually got the money from the state, but they paid their own teachers"
- "Family child care is the place where they do lose the kids. . .and where they feel disenfranchised from the system because they are not allowed to participate; there is no method for them to participate"
- "I think that some of those fears were less that they'd steal their kids, and more that it was frustration over the fact that the government had now come up with this wonderful new program for four-year-olds and it's going to be the best program there is and they're going to dump all of this money into it...and what about us little tiny child care centers that are striving to make it every day, who are providing quality services to four-year-olds? Why not dump all that money in what's already there?"
- "Instead of building a foundation on what exists and strengthening that or coupling with it, the implementation has not guaranteed that to happen...in the way that the funds flow"
- "I think there needs to be more information to all agencies"
- "In all situations that I was involved in with the Advisory Board, I continued to feel that the school district's relationship to child care was still not as positive as it could be...there was still an intimidation factor that the public schools were more in charge...always their observations and responses to questions asked were weighted heavier"
- "I think there is that strong 'we are the school and we really can't reach out to the community to do this, and because we don't have space, we're not doing it,' and I think that's pretty prevalent in every place that someone has said 'no' "

Half-Day Nature of UPK

In the telephone interviews, a number of CCR&R directors and staff expressed concerns about the half-day nature of the UPK program. Comments included the following:

- "Some centers are not interested in taking a child for half a day or for just a few hours"
- "I think that we have to pay particular attention to the actual needs of early care that families need—and it's usually not two and one-half or three hours a day"
- "They are also going to have to grapple with having sufficient after-school and wrap-around programs"
- "It doesn't meet the needs of working families whatsoever"

These concerns on the length of UPK programming are indicated in the data. In Year Two of UPK, 1999-2000, almost 50% of the upstate classrooms and 40% of the New York City classrooms offered a half- or full-day program with extended day care available.[13] About 40% of the classrooms in upstate districts and 50% of those in New York City districts offered half-day programs without an extended day option. About 10% of the programs ran the length of the school day without any additional services available. The availability of extended day care is especially important for working families and for those programs that do not offer transportation to another child care setting before or after the UPK program.[14]

Lack of Transportation

Furthermore, CCR&R directors and staff raised concerns about transportation. Transportation is not a mandatory component of UPK, nor is UPK funding available for districts to cover their transportation costs. As a result, not all districts have offered transportation services to their UPK children. Comments illustrate the concerns of agencies, particularly in rural areas:

[13] Extended day programs run during the parents' working hours. Full-day programs provide care during the hours that primary school is in session.
[14] Lekies & Cochran, 2001.

- "The parents needed to get transportation to and from. . .If they're working parents or very low income, that wasn't an option"
- "It covers a widespread area. . .it's rural. . .and transportation was a huge problem"
- "The nightmare was transportation. The school wasn't going to provide transportation for those youngsters to get to child care"

Lack of Universality

A new state requirement in 1999-2000 specified that districts must give preference to a certain percentage of children classified as economically disadvantaged. Districts were required to make efforts to enroll the same or greater proportion of economically disadvantaged children as their free and reduced lunch program ratios (FRLP). The FRLP averaged 47% in upstate New York and 78% in New York City. However, the percentage of economically disadvantaged children actually served by UPK was considerably greater than required in most districts, particularly in upstate New York. This figure averaged 64% in upstate districts and 83% in New York City.[15]

A number of CCR&R agency directors and staff discussed their concerns about the Universal Prekindergarten Program not being truly universal and open to all children. They noticed that UPK currently is unable to serve all eligible children and the disproportionate number of children from low-income families being served by UPK:

- "The thing that's going to be difficult for a school system as this thing evolves is, at what point will they say 'Universal'? Well, the word 'Universal' with 60 slots isn't universal"
- "With the income eligibility guidelines, there were kids that weren't able to participate"
- "There are many preschoolers on the Head Start waiting list because of missed registration deadlines, and the way I hear it—is that these children are being chosen first for the program. . .But those are not the people that the program was supposed to target"
- "We don't feel that it should be called Universal Pre-K because it's not"

[15] Lekies and Cochran, 2001.

Developmentally Inappropriate Practice

The intent of the UPK legislation and regulations is that UPK provide an educational experience that is developmentally appropriate for four-year-old children. However, many CCR&R agency directors and staff expressed fears and concerns that this was not the case:

- "UPK put into the public school system simply lowers that academic push for four-year-olds. . .the early childhood field—would like to work closely with the public schools to make sure that those are developmentally appropriate programs"
- "It's watered-down first grade curriculum"
- "I think, unfortunately, it reinforced a program that was very academically based and structured"
- "And some parents have this feeling: 'Do we want to put our children, that young, into a school setting already?"
- "We are clearly concerned as to whether or not UPK is going to become a junior kindergarten"
- "Our kindergarten teachers—and presumably these individuals that are now going to be hired for pre-K programs—they don't have early childhood experience in their degree work"
- "We do have some concerns about the teacher who may have been working in second grade or third grade jumping down to pre-K, because of the methodology that's used being so different in terms of teaching the children"

Funding Issues

Many CCR&R agency directors expressed concerns about funding for UPK. Issues raised focused on the amount of funding provided by the State for UPK programming, inadequate levels of funding, how long UPK funding will last, and the potential for local taxes to increase:

- "I'm not sure that the school district is prepared to put forth the money it's going to cost them to have their teachers implementing the program"
- "I'm hearing from some districts that parents are concerned about, 'you implement this program and you start it and you're not raising our taxes now but if you're going to keep this program going, how do you expect to pay for it and what's going to happen down the line? Are our taxes going to increase?' "

- "For the districts that are in it and the ones that we're trying to get into it is the thing looming over them that in two years the money's going to go away"
- "UPK doesn't provide enough funds to contract out"
- "The training and psychologists, as wonderful as they are, they can't replace cash"

Teacher Certification Requirement

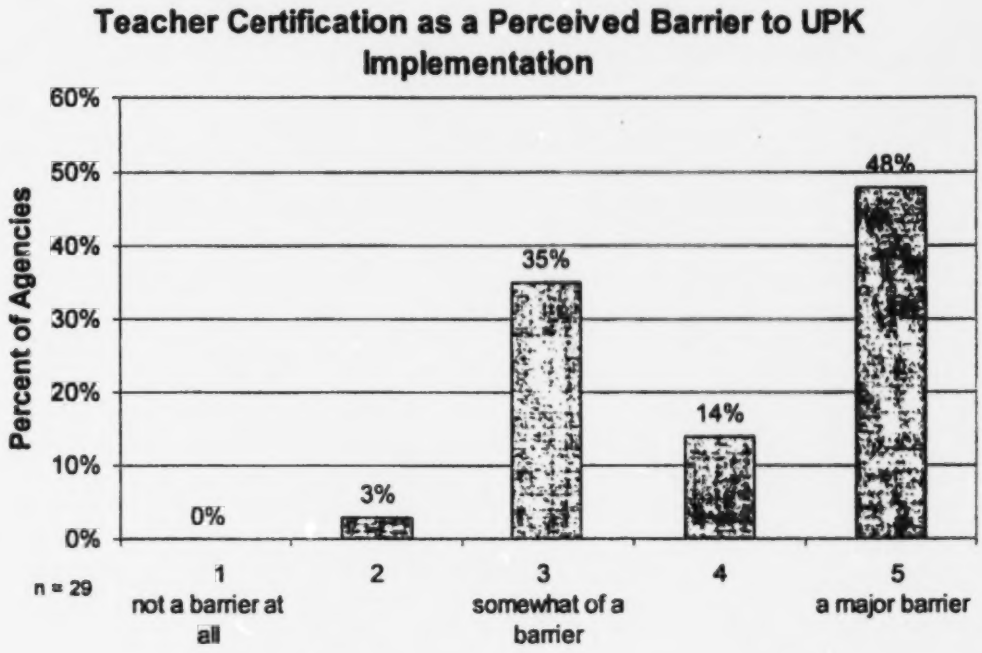
Beginning in the 2001-2002 year, all UPK teachers are required to be N-6 certified.[16] As of the 1999-2000 year, over 90% of the teachers in the upstate classrooms and 75% of those in the New York City classrooms were state-certified. However, the extent of certification varied by site location type, with school-based classrooms having higher rates of certified teachers than community-based or Head Start classrooms. For example, in the New York City districts, the percent of classrooms with certified teachers was 91% in district sites, 68% in community-based sites, and 44% in Head Start sites.[17] The CCR&R agency directors and staff expressed concerns about the certification requirement, as well as salary differentials between school-based and community-based pre-K teachers:

- "It's a Department of Education guideline and, frankly, we have many preschool teachers that can do wonderfully well without a teacher certificate. . .I think that in itself drives a bigger wedge between the Department of Education and the early childhood community"
- "In a particular situation here, I have a person with twenty-three years of experience and a Master's degree with a certification as a high school math teacher and does not qualify"
- "There's a lot of tremendously capable people who are not teacher-certified, as there are a lot of teachers certified who are not tremendously capable people"
- "With teacher certification, you don't have concentrated infant and toddler development; you have one child development course"
- "We have a very strong teachers' union. . .so obviously they're not going to be able to keep up the competitive rates that the schools do"

[16] In New York State, the certification for teachers wishing to work with four-year-olds covers nursery school through Grade 6. This certification requires a Master's degree. Teachers with provisional certification are classified as "certified" for State reporting purposes and eligibility for teaching in UPK classrooms. However, these teachers will need to complete all educational and experience requirements in a certain time period to achieve full certification, and thus the ability to continue teaching in UPK classrooms.

[17] Lekies and Cochran, 2001.

Survey data from the CCR&Rs indicated concerns about teacher certification as a barrier for centers and other providers applying for UPK. When asked to what extent teacher certification was a barrier, respondents gave a rating of 4.07 on a scale of one to five, with one being not at all a barrier and five being a major barrier. As shown in the table below, almost all respondents indicated a rating of three or above.



These findings are consistent with the UPK directors' survey findings discussed previously that indicated staff qualifications are a barrier to community based-participation in UPK and an important factor in choosing UPK sites.

G. Positive Impacts of UPK

Overall, CCR&R agency directors and staff were much more likely to be positive than negative about Universal Prekindergarten and seemed optimistic about the future of the program. Some of the areas discussed included better preparation for kindergarten, greater awareness of the benefits of early care and education and the need for well-qualified teachers, additional resources, more staff development opportunities, improvements in program quality, and the formation of new partnerships. The following comments highlight the positive regard for UPK:

- "The schools see it as a tremendous benefit for those children who are entering kindergarten"
- "That was a very positive thing—that we had a forum and opportunity to raise the awareness of the community as to what child care really is all about, the existence of our agency that was here to serve the parents of the community"
- "Training opportunities for both providers and parents"
- "Raise the awareness that we need better-educated people working in the field of early childhood and because they have to have that certified teacher"
- "It's been a shot in the arm, because it's so well-resourced. They have equipment, they have money, there's supplies, and the training that's available to their staff because they're UPK sites. . .resources like psychologists being available"
- "We've seen a dramatic improvement in the level of quality in the existing preschool programs that have become UPK sites. . .It's really just staggering"
- "The impact really is twofold. It's brought additional resources into existing programs and it's helped to improve quality, and it's tremendously improved the linkages between the early childhood community and the public schools"
- "We've gone from programs where literally there wasn't a toy in the classroom, and there were like long wood planks for these three-year-old boys, to rooms now that have learning centers. . .it's so exciting"
- "I think that it has opened up doors to new kinds of partnerships between the local school district and other early childhood programs in the community. I think that it has raised the possibility for shared staff development and training. It's certainly given parents an opportunity to have at least a part of the day of their early childhood program paid for. And it's really generated a tremendous amount of excitement in New York City about the new potential for looking at a much broader definition of who. . .provides educational early childhood programs"

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- "I think the impact that Universal Pre-K has brought is for that population that it is serving, it has bought. . .more supplies, more materials, more – you know, a little bit more things that they're able to supply the children. . .more staffing"

- "The amount of people that suddenly have come out of the woodwork to pick up their degree before January of 2001. . .it's just amazing. The early childhood program has just expanded at the local university"

On the CCR&R surveys, one quarter of the responding directors and staff reported that they were aware of changes community-based day care or other child care programs were making to become eligible for UPK funding. These changes included hiring teachers, staff training, changes in programming, certification of staff, improving facilities, obtaining licenses, and expanding their knowledge of UPK. In addition, approximately one quarter of the respondents felt that UPK has increased participation in staff development training by child care centers and others who provide child care services.

CHAPTER FOUR

Summary and Recommendations

This chapter presents a summary of findings, along with recommendations for school districts, child care resource and referral agencies, and others interested in the implementation of Universal Prekindergarten.

Summary

This study was undertaken primarily due to concern that the New York Universal Prekindergarten program might be having an impact unanticipated by policymakers: Competition for four-year-olds in local communities could drive some existing full-day, full-year child care programs out of business, which in turn would reduce services available to families with infants and toddlers. What is the extent of this competition, and is it causing harm to the existing early care and education system, particularly for infant and toddler services? Surveys and interview data from child care resource and referral agency directors across the state, along with supplemental data from surveys to UPK directors, were used to provide insight into these and other issues related to the implementation of UPK.

The potential magnitude of UPK impact on infant and toddler programs is considerable. It is estimated that about one-third of New York City and almost one-half of the upstate child care centers and nursery schools used as UPK sites for four-year olds also served infants and toddlers in the 1999-2000 year; upstate data suggest that about 10% of all child care centers received UPK funds during this period. These figures are likely to increase as UPK expands into more community-based programs over the next few years.

However, the findings suggest that concerns of widespread competition and loss of infant-toddler services are not warranted at this stage of UPK implementation. The primary factors mitigating such an impact appear to be: 1) the demand for services for four-year-old children remains high even with UPK; 2) the part-day nature of many UPK programs that will not affect four-year-olds who need full-day care; 3) the modest size of many UPK programs at the time these data were collected; and 4) the actual expansion of some programs and development of new programs to serve infants and toddlers. Only in a few cases did respondents report that centers closed or were at risk due to UPK. Overall, fears did not come true.

Implementation of Universal Prekindergarten is still underway in the participating school districts. It is possible that as the UPK roll-out becomes more complete, competitive forces not now apparent could emerge. For this reason, it will be important to monitor the possible impacts of UPK on programs serving infants and toddlers in the years to come. Indeed, preliminary evidence from non-UPK programs in two case study districts indicates these center directors have some concern about competition and lost revenue in the future.

Although the focus of this study was on infant and toddler services, the CCR&R agency directors and staff raised a number of other issues as well. Somewhat surprising was the extent to which the respondents mentioned the positive impacts of UPK on children, families, teachers, community-based programs, and the overall education and care system. Consistently and overwhelmingly they mentioned benefits such as better preparation for kindergarten, greater recognition of the importance of early care and education, increased status for teachers, additional resources, more staff development opportunities, improvements in program quality, and the formation of new partnerships between schools and community programs. These positive results are linked in part to the amount of added financial resources for four-year-olds in many communities provided by UPK. In some cases, these resources make funds previously used for four-year-olds available for serving younger children.

At the same time, the respondents mentioned concerns about UPK. These did not center on competition and impacts on infant and toddler services, but rather on a number of other key components of the UPK program. Concerns raised included: lack of collaboration with community-based programs and the exclusion of family providers, half-day programs that do not meet the needs of working families, lack of transportation, lack of universality, the use of developmentally inappropriate practices, inadequacy and instability of funding, and required teacher certification. In some cases, better communication between school districts and local providers—and a clearer understanding of local needs—could improve relationships, allow for better program planning, and alleviate difficulties. Other concerns are related to the law and regulations at the State level and require greater advocacy efforts.

The child care resource and referral directors and staff who participated in this study have added a new perspective to the implementation of UPK. Many have been actively involved participating on advisory boards, raising awareness, facilitating collaboration, providing data, developing technical assistance manuals, and in other efforts. These activities have been essential in helping UPK "get off the ground" and develop into a successful program for young children and their families.

Recommendations

From the findings of this study, a number of recommendations can be made for child care resource and referral agencies, school districts, UPK planners, and those involved with UPK at the state level:

- **Recommendation 1:** A more complete compilation of examples of proactive involvement by CCR&Rs should be collected, distributed, and used to provide direction and suggestions for other agency directors or stakeholders interested in contributing to the realization of UPK in their local communities.

Through telephone interviews and surveys, CCR&R agency directors and staff provided many ideas for contributing to the implementation of UPK that could serve as models for others interested in early care and education, child advocates, and policy makers.

- **Recommendation 2:** Child care resource and referral agencies should gather data on the number and types of programs in their county that receive UPK funds and monitor how this changes over time as UPK reaches full implementation.

Many of the agencies surveyed did not have data readily available on the number of center-based programs in their counties that received UPK funding. It would be beneficial to have specific data on the number and different types of programs receiving UPK funds by county to identify any trends and possible relationship with UPK.

- **Recommendation 3:** School districts should invite all eligible community-based providers to participate in UPK and make the application process as clear as possible. School districts should collaborate with CCR&Rs and other organizations to provide assistance to programs currently ineligible to help them make improvements and meet the necessary qualifications.

Many CCR&R directors indicated that lack of publicity regarding UPK funding and application procedures were major concerns. Also, in New York City over one-third of responding UPK directors indicated that paperwork requirements/documentation were a barrier to participation in UPK by community-based providers. Publicizing the opportunity to apply for UPK funding and clarifying the application procedure would increase the pool of applicants to participate in UPK. Increasing the competition for participation would raise the expectations for provision of service and increase the probability of finding the best organizations to provide UPK. This practice would also improve relations between community-based providers and the school districts by adding a sense of fairness, equity, and cooperation to the RFP process.

- **Recommendation 4:** Analysis should be made of the district plans and budgets, particularly in those districts in which funding is considered to be a major barrier to community-based participation in UPK. A closer examination of these budgets—and the needs of community-based programs—will provide the State and district planners with information about the costs of providing UPK services, the challenges faced by local programs, and recommendations for those districts struggling with funding. These efforts will also provide information that can be used to advocate for additional funding if necessary.

Over 40% of upstate UPK directors reported that lack of available funding was a major barrier to participation in UPK by community-based providers. Also, some CCR&R directors indicated that funding and the inability of community-based providers to pay competitive salaries to certified teachers are major community concerns. However, many other districts have complete or near complete UPK programming through community-based providers. Budget information from districts should be analyzed to provide recommendations to state policy makers and to other districts and agencies struggling with funding.

- **Recommendation 5:** Child care programs that have closed or are under-enrolled since the implementation of UPK should be studied in more detail to determine if this is in any way linked to UPK. This information could be used to determine how such unanticipated consequences can be avoided.

Although closing or under-enrollment of existing programs as a result of UPK was only reported in a very small minority of interviews, much can be learned from these cases. An in-depth study of the factors that led to the closings and under-enrollment could help prevent repeated mistakes or unsuccessful practices in other districts and states.

- **Recommendation 6:** Advisory boards and school districts should keep in mind the possible impacts on the local child care market when deciding how to implement UPK. They should consider the number of four-year-olds in their area unserved by any early care and education program, the perceived need for early care and education for these four-year-olds, the need for full-day services, and the capacity of existing programs when determining whether UPK should be more school- or community-based.

This will become increasingly important as more children throughout New York State are served by UPK. The results of interviews with CCR&R directors and staff indicated that competition is not a major issue at this point in UPK implementation. However, as new districts plan to implement UPK and the number of children served in existing UPK programs increases, districts should consider the issue of competition and form partnerships with existing programs to increase the overall supply and quality of child care rather than produce competition.

Recommendations 7-11 are taken from a report summarizing the results of the survey completed by UPK directors. These recommendations are reiterated in this report because the data that prompted them was reinforced and repeated through interviews with CCR&R agency directors and staff.

- **Recommendation 7:** Advisory boards should include a broad range of community child care providers, and school districts should consult with community child care providers when planning how to implement UPK.

The CCR&R directors indicated that lack of collaboration or consultation with community-based child care providers was a major community concern. Community providers can provide expertise, perspective, and experience in providing early child care. Also, collaboration and communication will improve relations between the school district and community providers as well as the overall early care and education system.

- **Recommendation 8:** Child care resource and referral agencies are strongly encouraged to gather information from parents of three-year-olds about anticipated needs for full-day care and work with school districts in designing programming to meet those needs.

CCR&R agency directors communicated that the half-day nature of UPK programs is a major concern regarding the implementation of UPK as well as a barrier to meeting the needs of working families. Many families are in need of full-day care. However, findings from the survey of UPK directors indicate that in 1999-2000 only between 40% and 50% of the UPK classrooms offered wrap-around care for those children who needed care beyond a half-day program or the hours school is typically in session.[18] How does this affect the ability of all children to participate in UPK? Districts are encouraged to look at the needs of families with three-year-olds and plan options that will help ensure greater accessibility to UPK. Working closely with community-based providers and exploring transportation possibilities to these locations, especially when UPK is primarily school-based, can help to open the program to children who currently may not be able to attend.

- **Recommendation 9:** The state is encouraged to amend transportation aid to allow for reimbursement of the transportation of four-year-olds, consistent with the existing school-age reimbursement policies and procedures.

Child care resource and referral agency directors and staff identified lack of transportation as a primary concern regarding the implementation of UPK. UPK directors also identified lack of transportation as a barrier to program access. Although traditionally considered a challenge in rural school districts, lack of transportation is also a problem in urban districts for those family care providers who cannot transport the four-year-olds in their care to a half-day UPK program at another site.

- **Recommendation 10:** Greater emphasis should be given to serving families across the full range of socio-economic levels and family types.

Child care resource and referral agency directors and staff consistently expressed concern and confusion over use of the title Universal Prekindergarten and the lack of universality of the program. The findings from the survey of UPK directors indicate that school districts have fulfilled their responsibility to involve children living in families with low or very limited incomes. Districts should now give emphasis to serving all families in the school districts with four-year-olds. This will involve not only locating those additional children, but also providing the UPK experience in a form that meets the broader child care needs of families (e.g., full-day center care, links with family child care).

- **Recommendation 11:** School districts are strongly encouraged to pay close attention to discrepancies in the salaries of certified teachers in school-based and community-based UPK programs and seek ways to bolster the salaries of UPK teachers in community-based programs.

[18] Lekies and Cochran, 2001.

CCR&R agency directors and staff explained that discrepancies between school-district and community-based teachers' salaries are a major barrier to securing certified teachers in community-based sites and lead to high teacher turnover rates. Of concern is that teachers in community-based programs will move to the public schools once positions become available, further exacerbating the high turnover rates in early care and education settings. Gathering data on teacher salaries at the community-based sites during the Request for Proposal (RFP) process will inform district UPK coordinators of the extent to which discrepancies exist.

- **Recommendation 12:** Child care resource and referral agencies and school districts should document and publicize the positive impacts they have observed as a result of UPK. This information should be shared with state officials, community leaders, parents, and other school districts in the process of determining whether to implement a UPK program.

References

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